

TURKEY RIGHTS MONITOR



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ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ARREST

Throughout the week, prosecutors ordered the detention of at least 342 people over alleged links to the Gülen movement. In October 2020, a UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) [opinion](#) said that widespread or systematic imprisonment of individuals with alleged links to the group may amount to crimes against humanity. Solidarity with OTHERS has compiled a detailed [database](#) to monitor the Gülen-linked mass detentions since a failed coup in July 2016.

February 22: The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in an opinion [called for](#) the immediate release of air force cadet Ahmet Dinçer Sakaoğlu who was sentenced to life on charges related to a coup attempt in July 2016, noting several rights violations that occurred during their pre-trial detention and trial process.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

February 22: The authorities [arrested](#) Bilal Konakçı, a bomb disposal expert who was severely injured in an explosion in 2009, was arrested after his prison sentence was upheld by the Supreme Court of Appeals. Convicted due to his alleged links to the Gülen movement, Konakçı is almost totally disabled and he can barely use the bathroom because of his motor problems. According to the law, he is eligible for parole.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

No news has emerged of [Yusuf Bilge Tunç](#) and [Hüseyin Galip Küçüközyiğit](#), former public sector workers who were sacked from their jobs by decree-laws during the 2016-2018 state of emergency and who were reported missing respectively as of August 6, 2019 and December

29, 2020, in what appear to be the latest cases in a string of suspected [enforced disappearance](#) of government critics since 2016. Küçüközyiğit's daughter [released](#) a video on Twitter, calling on President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to help find him.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

February 23: A court [ruled](#) to place under house arrest university students Doğukan Gürbey and Cihan Çiçek who were detained while handing out copies of a letter written from prison by Şilan Delipalta who was arrested in connection with Boğaziçi University protests.

February 24: The police in Ankara [detained](#) Celil Resuloğulları and Hüseyin Ege Kök while for allegedly hanging posters about university protests.

February 25: The Tunceli Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 30 days.

February 26: The Şanlıurfa Governor's Office [issued](#) a ban on all outdoor gatherings for a period of 30 days.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND MEDIA

February 22: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) lawyer Mert Yaşar for insulting the president on social media. Yaşar was arrested on Feb. 24.

February 22: A Kayseri court [ruled](#) to block access to the website of the Mezopotamya news agency.

February 22: An Aydın court [sentenced](#) local CHP politician Ayşe Özdemir to 11 months, 20 days in prison on the charge of insulting the president.

February 22: An Ardahan court [ruled](#) to block access to the website of the pro-Kurdish Nerina Azad news website.

February 23: A Sakarya court [ruled](#) to block access to 10 news stories mentioning the name of mayor Ekrem Yüce, citing violation of his personal rights.

February 23: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news stories about an alleged cover-up of a criminal investigation into a businessperson.

February 23: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) that journalist Hakan Aygün's rights were violated when he was arrested over a tweet involving a wordplay on the government's Covid-19 donation campaign.

February 24: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to acquit journalist Hakkı Boltan who was facing terrorism-related charges as part of a trial against the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Congress (DTK).

February 24: Van prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into HDP MPs Berdan Öz, Sezai Temelli, Muazzez Orhan Işık, Tayip Temel and Murat Sarısaç over their speeches and social media commentary.

February 24: The police in İstanbul [detained](#) a person identified with initials S.E. over his/her social media posts about the interior minister. S.E. was placed under house arrest later in the same day after appearing before a court, and ordered to follow an anger management seminar.

February 25: Van prosecutors [decided](#) for non-prosecution of journalist Oktay Candemir who was investigated over a tweet criticizing a TV series about the Ottoman era.

February 25: An Elazığ court [ruled](#) to block access to news stories about a man who allegedly engaged in usury by claiming to be closely connected to the presidency.

February 25: An Ankara court [ruled](#) to block access to news stories about a delayed delivery of order of payments which led to execution proceedings against a number of farmers in Bursa.

February 26: An İstanbul court [accepted](#) the indictment of university student Beyza Buldağ who is accused of "inciting hatred and enmity among public" and "provoking

criminal activity," over 20 messages posted on social media in support of Boğaziçi University protests.

February 26: Prosecutors [indicted](#) seven students, seeking up to three years in prison for "inciting hatred and animosity," over a poster depicting Islam's holiest site with LGBT imagery.

February 26: An İstanbul court [imposed](#) a monetary fine against journalist Erk Acarer over his news report about the alleged SADAT network within the army and the judiciary.

February 26: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to news stories about a dermatologic cream allegedly distributed by a public-owned company to ministries.

February 27: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to block access to blog entries about former finance minister Berat Albayrak.

February 28: A Diyarbakır court [charged](#) a local man with terrorist propaganda over a social media post about former US president's 2019 letter to President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

February 28: An İstanbul court [ruled](#) to ban the publication and distribution of a book authored by Nurettin Demirtaş. The court also ruled for the confiscation of the existing copies of the book.

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE & RULE OF LAW

February 22: The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in an opinion [called for](#) the immediate release of air force cadet Ahmet Dinçer Sakaoğlu who was sentenced to life on charges related to a coup attempt in July 2016, noting several rights violations that occurred during their pre-trial detention and trial process.

February 22: An investigative report [claimed](#) that an alleged child abuser had his conviction overturned by accusing the victims' family of being linked to the Gülen movement.

February 25: The Constitutional Court [rejected](#) a request by imprisoned lawyer Aytaç Ünsal for deferring the execution of his prison sentence. Ünsal's treatment following his 215-day death fast was interrupted by his imprisonment.

KURDISH MINORITY

February 22: Prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into pro-Kurdish lawmaker Dirayet Dilan Taşdemir for allegedly travelling to a Kurdish-controlled region of Iraq where 13 hostages were killed in a failed rescue operation.

February 22: A Manisa court [ruled](#) to arrest three out of seven local HDP youth detained on Feb. 15 while releasing on probation the remaining four.

February 22: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) Democratic Society Congress (DTK) member Jiyan Taş to six years, three months in prison on terrorism-related charges.

February 22: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) former district co-mayor Filiz Buluttekin to seven years, six months in prison on terrorism-related charges.

February 22: A Kayseri court [ruled](#) to block access to the website of the Mezopotamya news agency, which is known for its reporting on rights violations in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast.

February 22: An Ardahan court [ruled](#) to block access to the website of the pro-Kurdish Nerina Azad news website.

February 22: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) former district co-mayor Filiz Buluttekin to seven years, six months on terrorism-related charges.

February 23: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) in favor of Kurdish politician İbrahim Halil Baran who submitted an individual application to the court in 2017 that he was tortured by police in detention in Şanlıurfa.

February 24: A Van court [sentenced](#) former district co-mayor Bayram Çiçek and city council member Abdülkerim Akbaş to two years, one month in prison each on terrorism-related charges, while acquitting city council member Erhan Akbaş of the same charge.

February 24: A Kocaeli court [sentenced](#) local HDP politicians Mehmet Alçinkaya, Ebubekir Çoban, Damla Bağcı, Mehmet Karasalan, Kudbeddin Güneşsuyu, Leyla Aygün, Emine Karaaslan and CHP politician Osman Kurum to varying lengths of prison sentences on terrorism charges, while acquitting 19 others who were standing trial in the same case.

February 24: Van prosecutors [launched](#) an investigation into HDP MPs Berdan Öz, Sezai Temelli, Muazzez Orhan Işık, Tayip Temel and Murat Sarısaç over their speeches and social media commentary.

February 24: A Diyarbakır court [ruled](#) to acquit journalist Hakkı Boltan who was facing terrorism-related charges as part of a trial against the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Congress (DTK).

February 26: A Diyarbakır court [sentenced](#) provincial HDP executive Mehmet Sayit Demir to six years, eight months on charges of terrorism and violation of the law on demonstrations and marches.

February 27: The police in Diyarbakır [detained](#) 14 people, including HDP members. The reason for the detentions was not disclosed on account of confidentiality orders.

February 28: The police in Mardin [detained](#) five local HDP members. Four of the detainees were released after appearing before a court the same day.

PRISON CONDITIONS

February 22: A prison administration reportedly [made](#) inmate Ali Öztürk wait for a week for an urgently needed gallbladder operation.

TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT

February 23: The family of Kadir Aktar, a 17-year-old boy who allegedly committed suicide in police custody in İstanbul, [requested](#) an investigation into the circumstances of his death, due to [suspicions](#) that he was tortured.

February 23: The Constitutional Court [ruled](#) in favor of Kurdish politician İbrahim Halil Baran who submitted an individual application to the court in 2017 that he was tortured by police in detention in Şanlıurfa.

February 23: The police in İzmir reportedly [coerced](#) two activists into becoming informants for the state during their detention.

February 24: The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (TİHV) released a [report](#) which found that at least 800 people demonstrating against the appointment of a pro-government rector to Boğaziçi University were subjected

to ill-treatment by police officers who carried out their detention in 38 provinces.

February 25: Media reports revealed that Zehra Canan, a 70-year-old woman, was [subjected](#) to physical violence by neighborhood guards in Ankara.

February 27: Gendarmerie in Şanlıurfa physically [assaulted](#) a woman during a detention operation.

February 28: Media reports revealed that the guards at a Kayseri prison physically [assaulted](#) inmates who refused to be subjected to a strip-search during an involuntary prison transfer.